

CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF GENOCIDE AND ETHNOCIDE

by

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INTRODUCTION

We have been doing research on the history and sociology of genocide for several years and have been teaching a course on this topic at Concordia University. We should tell you right at the start one of the results of this work that we have been doing: we have become increasingly uncomfortable with the two concepts that are the topic of this paper. The older one of these two concepts, genocide, was coined by Raphael Lemkin in 1944 as part of a campaign to have the community of nations recognize as a crime and outlaw the deliberate extermination of a group. Right from the beginning, the definition of the concept became subject to political considerations rather than scholarly ones. After the war, the French coined the second concept to deal with the extermination of a culture that did not involve the physical extermination of the people (Girodet, 1981: 269).

Increasingly, both words have become "buzz words" for several reasons: the acts that they were intended to describe are ordinarily committed by sovereign states, the same states that were asked to condemn and outlaw them. Since no states could be found willing to condemn themselves, the definition of the concept was distorted so that it would apply only to regimes that do not exist any more or to regimes whose enemies were willing to accuse them of such outrageous crimes. This politicization of the concept might have been counteracted

if there had been a large body of serious research based on a rigorous definition. Unfortunately, no such body of research exists up to the present time. Finally, the almost universal condemnation of Hitler and Nazi ideology after the end of World War II has attached a very broad negative connotation to any concept associated with the Nazi regime. Thus, the term 'genocide', and to a lesser extent 'ethnocide', is now frequently misused to condemn any policy or program that one disagrees with, quite regardless of whether anybody has actually been killed or even persecuted. By the same political logic, the persecution and mass extermination of a group is not called 'genocide' by some if the perpetrator is a political ally or if the policy is in aid of ends that one agrees with.

For these reasons, these concepts have become almost useless in the context of scholarly research. What is needed there are concepts that are well-defined and refer to events that can be studied comparatively.

ETHNOCIDE

A number of authors treat ethnocide as synonymous with genocide. In our view, this practice leads to serious analytical confusion. For us, ethnocide is the deliberate attempt to destroy a culture without the intention of physically exterminating all of its members. The ethnocidal state usually builds its policies on the premise that the members of the victim group are worth sparing provided that their culture can be destroyed. The idea of salvage in ethnocide allows a variety of outcomes, ranging from total assimilation on the basis of equality to enslavement and the most brutal forms of economic exploitation. Lethal violence against persons is not essential to ethnocide. The ethnocidal state seeks to destroy the specific characteristics of

a culture. While it may resort to killing community leaders and dissidents, its fundamental tools are government decrees banning religions, languages and/or institutions vital to the reproduction of the target culture.

The roots of ethnocide are buried deep in antiquity, but it became a prominent and vigorous part of the modern historical landscape, strengthened by the rise of the nation-state and the spread of nationalism. Ethnocide was practiced by the Romans in Britain, in the attacks on paganism in the Byzantine Empire, in the assault on the culture of Languedoc, in the offensive against Gaelic in Scotland and Ireland, and in the onslaught against Cherokee Indian culture in the United States -- to cite just a few examples from several periods of history. While we recognize that there were certain cases in which ethnocidal policies were only the first step towards 'genocide', this should not cause us to abandon the distinction between the two concepts. Quite a few states have committed ethnocide, while only a few have moved on to genocide after their ethnocidal policies proved unsuccessful. Ambiguity about ethnocide may also arise from the fact that both ethnocide and 'genocide' to implement a belief, theory, or ideology are encouraged by the nation-state's drive towards cultural and ideological homogeneity. But they are not the same policies and they rarely occur together. Thus, those who confuse them impede scholarly efforts to understand and explain them.

MASS EXTERMINATION

While we are prepared to retain the word ethnocide in our vocabulary

because we can not think of a better term, we propose to substitute the term mass extermination for 'genocide'.

Mass extermination is defined as a mass murder committed with the intent to physically destroy a real or imaginary category of people, as defined by the perpetrator.

What is relevant here is the intent to destroy a whole group of people. The fact that there have almost always been survivors does not affect the definition; rather, it speaks to the imperfections of even the most sophisticated of human actions.

This approach has several virtues. It pinpoints the fact that we are not students of ethnocides -- unless they were the prelude to mass exterminations intended to destroy an entire group. Moreover, it extricates us from another quagmire: the fact that many categories of persons consigned to mass destruction were inventions created by the persecuting state. Should we include the killings of large numbers of persons who were defined as belonging to imaginary groups within our field of study? We believe that we should. The issue comes into focus in the case of the great European witch persecutions which killed tens of thousands in the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries; an extraordinary campaign against a group of persons which did not exist. The work of Christina Larner (1981) and Robert Muchembled (1979) strongly suggests that this was one of the first cases of ideologically-motivated mass extermination in history and the persecution was a consequence of attempts by new regimes to impose a new order or discipline on a recalcitrant population. Although ^{Societies of} witches never existed, it is essential that we study the campaign against them if we are to grasp the origins of ideologically-based mass extermination and its links with the

rise of the nation-state.

We exclude from our research those relatively recent happenings and events that have been polemically associated with the term 'genocide'. By defining our subject as the study of intentional mass extermination, we can set aside the debates over voluntary abortion and birth control, drug abuse treatment programmes, welfare and health care cutbacks, and the closing of churches and synagogues. These events merit scholarly attention, but they fall outside the boundaries of intentional mass extermination. We agree with Irving Louis Horowitz's argument that "Broadening the concept so that everyone ends up a victim of genocide only leads to tautological reasoning" (Horowitz, 1980: 182). These recent abuses of the term 'genocide' for partisan purposes have trivialized the word and undermined its usefulness for serious research.

We are painfully aware of the fact that history is full of horrible events that also should be studied. But no light will be shed on them by lumping together what should be kept apart. Therefore, we are not dealing with war casualties, massacres, riots, disasters, epidemics, etc. This is not because these events do not touch us as human beings, but because scholarly and comparative research imposes its own discipline and requires considerable conceptual and methodological rigour if it is to lead anywhere at all.

THE U.N. CONVENTION ON GENOCIDE

The broad scope of the United Nations' definition of genocide in the Convention of 1948 opened the door to some of the confusion evident in contemporary popular discourse. While the U.N. definition of acts of genocide began with "killing members of the group", it extended the

list to include acts "causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group" and to acts "imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group" (U.N. Convention on Genocide, 1948). Written while the evidence of Nazi atrocities was freshly imprinted on the minds of the delegates, the U.N. representatives never meant to cover mental effects of racial discrimination, voluntary birth control programmes, or many of the other acts which are frequently called 'genocide' to-day.

In at least one crucial dimension, the U.N. definition of genocide is too narrow -- it excludes political groups. Thus, one of the important categories of victims of mass extermination is not protected by the Convention. But then, it must be pointed out that this Convention has never yet protected any group.

Adopted by the General Assembly in the context of the Cold War and the struggle over colonialism, the Convention was the result of a political compromise between East and West. Soviet and Eastern European delegates to the U.N. strongly attacked the inclusion of political groups in the draft definition of the victims of genocide. They argued that the Nazis slated whole populations for destruction so that they could re-settle their territory and that they exterminated political groups only because they constituted the intellectual elite of these peoples. The Communist Bloc also maintained that extending the protection of the Convention to political groups -- which were mutable and lacked objective distinguishing characteristics, according to the Polish delegation -- would undermine the judicial rigour and enforce^e

ability of the Convention. On the other hand, the Eastern Bloc delegates argued for the inclusion in the U.N. definition of genocide of "racial and national groups which constituted distinct, clearly determinable communities" (Kuper, 1981: 25-26).

THE LITERATURE ON GENOCIDE

While there is a considerable amount of descriptive material devoted to case studies of particular genocides, there are only a few authors who have analyzed genocide from a scholarly, comparative perspective. A small group of writers, taking up the challenge of Raphael Lemkin's work, have contributed to this literature. The pioneering scholarly study of genocide published by Raphael Lemkin in 1944 established a definition of genocide which laid out the approximate boundaries of the concept and identified a number of specific historical events within its perimeter. Lemkin defined genocide in 1944 as the coordinated and planned destruction of a national, religious, racial or ethnic group by different actions aiming at the destruction of the essential foundations of the life of the group with the aim of annihilating it physically or culturally. What we call ethnocide was a form of genocide in Lemkin's all-inclusive definition. Writing as news of the Nazi's depredations flooded his mind, Lemkin's definition of genocide included attacks on political and social institutions, culture, language, national feelings, religion and the economic existence of the group. Acts directed against individuals because they were also members of a group came within his definition of genocide. These included killing the members of the

group or the destruction of their personal security, liberty, health, and dignity.

Lemkin incorporated a three-part typology of genocide based on the intent of the perpetrator in his 1944 book, The Axis in Occupied Europe. The aim of the first genocides -- which he situated in antiquity and the Middle Ages -- was a total or nearly total destruction of nations and groups. In the modern era, Lemkin argued, the dominant form of genocide was the destruction of a culture without an attempt to physically annihilate its bearers. Nazi genocide comprised the third type in Lemkin's analysis. It combined elements of ancient and modern genocide in a hybrid version characterized by the Nazi strategy which selected some peoples and groups for extermination in the gas chambers and others for ethnocidal assimilation and Germanization (Lemkin, 1944: 79-82). What Lemkin did not realize was that twentieth century genocide was increasingly becoming a case of the state physically liquidating a group of its own citizens. Had he paid more attention in his 1944 book to the case of the Armenian genocide of 1915 or the Nazi genocide of the German Jews, this facet of modern genocide might have played a more prominent role in his analysis.

For the next 28 years, there was almost no scholarly comparative output on genocide. Then, in the next eleven years, seven authors produced several books and articles renewing serious theoretical discourse on the subject. Hervé Savon's typology, which appeared in his book Du Cannibalisme au Génocide, published in 1972, deals with

genocides of substitution, devastation, and elimination. These types of genocides take their meaning from the outcome of genocidal killings (Savon, 1972: Ch. I). Savon's work fails to illuminate the events leading up to the genocide and the possible methods of interrupting the process.

In 1976, Irving Louis Horowitz tackled the subject in a short volume titled Genocide which he revised and reissued in 1980 under the title Taking Lives: Genocide and State Power. As the new title suggests, Horowitz views genocide as a fundamental political policy employed by the state to assure conformity to its ideology and its theory of the state.

Starting from this perspective, Horowitz devises an eight-part typology of modern societies in which the level of the state-induced repression is the key variable (Horowitz, 1980: Ch. 4). Genocidal societies -- defined as societies in which the state arbitrarily takes the lives of citizens who deviate from its ideology -- occupy one extreme of the spectrum. Turkey in 1915 and modern Brazil are thus characterized. From genocidal societies, Horowitz's system takes up more authoritarian categories -- deportation or incarceration societies, torture societies, and harassment societies -- until they gradually shade into more liberal societies. Horowitz's typology is based primarily on twentieth century cases. His unilinear approach, focused on outcomes, does little to explain the process whereby an authoritarian state resorts to genocide or to account for pre-twentieth century genocides. Moreover, as Horowitz himself candidly admits, a typology based on internal repression cannot explain by itself those

genocides conducted in foreign countries. Yet, we cannot leave Horowitz without acknowledging that his discussion of the role of the state in genocide and his critique of the failure of modern social science to tackle the most pressing social issues of our day ring true.

Vakhan Dadrian (1975), one of the first scholars to emphasize intent in the study of genocide, published a rather confusing typology about the same time that Horowitz's book appeared. He posits five types of genocide: (1) cultural genocide, in which pre-emptive assimilation is the perpetrator's aim; (2) latent genocide, which is the result of activities with unintended consequences, such as civilian deaths during bombing raids or the accidental spread of disease during an invasion; (3) retributive genocide, designed to punish a segment of a minority which challenges a dominant group; (4) utilitarian genocide, putting mass killing at the service of economic exploitation; and (5) optimal genocide, characterized by the indiscriminate slaughter of members of a group to achieve its total obliteration. In the latter category, Dadrian locates the Armenian and the Jewish holocausts. Dadrian's lumping together of intended and unintended genocide serves to weaken the rigour of his typology. It seems to us that Dadrian has blended together in his typology the motives of the perpetrators, unintended outcomes, ethnocide, and non-genocidal, though murderous, punitive expeditions. We learned a great deal from his discussion of the importance of perpetrator intent, but have not been able to use his typology effectively in our work.

Helen Fein included two thoughtful pages on types of genocide

in her 1979 book on the Holocaust, Accounting for Genocide (pp. 7-8). Before the rise of the nation-state, Fein argues, there were two types of genocide: genocides intended to eliminate converts to another faith and genocides designed to exterminate other tribes because they could not be subdued or assimilated. The nation-state has given birth to three new types of genocide in her view: in the first, the state commits mass extermination to legitimate the existence of the state as the vehicle for the destiny of the dominant group; in the second, the state kills to eliminate an aboriginal group blocking its expansion or development; and, in the third, the state reacts without premeditation to rebellion by subordinated classes by totally eliminating a rival or potential elite.

Understandably, there are omissions and gaps in Fein's typology, which is only incidental to her major task. She does not provide a place for mass exterminations intended to instill terror in others to facilitate conquest or for mass killings for economic enrichment. These are categories that we have found helpful in our own work.

Jack Nusan Porter published last year an anthology on Genocide and Human Rights which we found useful although it deals only with twentieth century cases. In his introduction, he struggles with the problem of definition along lines similar to ours, although he does not go so far as to reject the use of the term 'genocide' (Porter, 1982: 2-14).

Leo Kuper has contributed more to the comparative study of the overall problem of genocide than any scholar since Raphael Lemkin. In his 1981 monograph on the subject, Kuper wrestles with the problems of genocidal process and motivation. His discussion of past genocides clusters the motives of the perpetrator around three categories:

(1) genocides designed to resolve religious, racial, and ethnic differences; (2) genocides intended to terrorize a people conquered by a colonizing empire; and (3) genocides perpetrated to enforce or fulfill a political ideology (Kuper, 1981: 11-18). Kuper is particularly concerned with the increasing frequency of genocidal events in the modern period. Since modern genocides occur within nation-states that have the character of plural societies, the creation of new plural societies during the period of colonization and decolonization becomes of particular significance for his analysis. Under the heading of "related atrocities", Kuper discusses two groups which are excluded under the U.N. definition of genocide (1981: 138-160). These are the victims of mass political slaughter and attempts to decimate an economic class. He examines three sets of exterminations in this category: in Stalin's Russia, the decimation of the peasants, the Party elite, and the ethnic minorities; in Indonesia, the slaughter of communists in 1965; and in Cambodia, the mass murders of the Kampuchean government led by the Khmer Rouge. Kuper concludes that each of these cases would have been labelled genocide if political groups had been protected by the U.N. Convention.

In examining a large number of cases, Kuper insists on the need to refer to specific conditions in each case. He does not think that it is possible to write in general terms about the genocidal process. "The only valid approach would be to set up a typology of genocides" (1981: 105) and to analyze the genocidal process in each type and under specific conditions.

As we agree that this is the most promising approach, we now present here our attempt at such a typology.

A TYPOLOGY OF MASS EXTERMINATION

Since intent is a crucial part of our definition, it must also be the basis of our typology. We propose to classify mass exterminations in the terms of those committed (1) to eliminate the threat from a rival, (2) to create terror, (3) to acquire economic wealth, and (4) to implement a theory or ideology. In looking at actual cases, the motives tend to be more complex than such a relatively simple scheme allows for; therefore, cases are assigned to one of these types on the basis of what we consider to have been *the* dominant intent. Because our interest is both historical and comparative, we propose to make this presentation a historical one.

We do not know when the first 'genocide' occurred. It seems unlikely that early man engaged in 'genocide' during the hunting and gathering stage. While we have no direct evidence, this seems a reasonable assumption because men lived in quite small groups and overall population densities were extremely low (1 per 10 km² of habitable terrain, ^(acc. to) McEvedy and Jones, 1978: 14).

After the invention of agriculture, the world divided into nomads and settlers, and that started systematic conflict in the form of food raiding by the nomads. But again, it seems very unlikely that anything approaching 'genocide' occurred. The nomads quickly learned to raid their settled neighbours at harvest time for their food stores, but they had no interest in exterminating them because they planned to repeat their raids in subsequent years. The settlers may have had much better reason to do away with the nomads, but they had neither the means nor the skills to do so.

When trade developed, the scene changed dramatically. Conflicts arose over trade and trade routes. Wars were fought over the access to wealth and over the control of the transportation network -- to use a modern term. At first, these conflicts were probably in the nature of brigandry and robbery. Soon they escalated to wars between states. However, these warring peoples soon discovered that their victories were mostly temporary: the defeated peoples withdrew long enough to rebuild their resources and their armies and then tried to recoup their losses and to avenge their defeat. This pattern became so common that someone decided that the only way to ensure a stable future was to eliminate the defeated enemy once and for all. Those that were not killed in battle were sold into slavery and dispersed. This elimination of a potential future THREAT appears to be the reason for the first 'genocides' in history. They seem to have been common throughout antiquity, especially in the Middle East where trade routes between Asia, Africa, and Europe crossed. The Assyrians were very good at it; about a number of the people whom they vanquished we know little but their names (Jastrow, 1971). When the empire of the Hittites was destroyed, it was done so efficiently that we did not even know the location of their capital until an inspired German archeologist unearthed it almost by accident (Gurney, 1973). Perhaps the best-known example of this type of mass extermination is the destruction of Carthage (Warmington, 1960). The so-called Punic Wars between Carthage and Rome lasted well over a century and basically involved the control of the Mediterranean trade and economy. These wars were incredibly costly in terms of material and lives -- even by modern standards. After Rome just barely won the Third Punic War, it

decided that Carthage had to be eliminated once and for all. Those who were not killed were sold into slavery and the city was destroyed.

The second type of mass extermination is one committed primarily for ECONOMIC reasons. It probably also originated in antiquity. People looking for greater wealth than their own world provided, found it in the possession of others. When this wealth was in the form of natural resources, it could not be carried off as loot; it could only be occupied, and the indigenous population was enslaved and/or exterminated. This type of mass extermination has continued to occur throughout history to our present day. It has often been associated with colonial expansion and the discovery of new parts of the world. The Tasmanians (Travers, 1968) disappeared in the same way that some of the peoples of the interior of Brazil are disappearing to-day (Davis, 1977).

The third type of mass extermination was a somewhat later invention and was associated with the building and maintaining of empire. To conquer others and to keep them subjugated requires large armies and a permanent investment in a large occupying force. It is probably Ghengis Khan who should be credited with the realization that the creation of TERROR is far more efficient (Saunders, 1971). He offered his prospective conquests a choice of submission or extermination. If they did not submit, the threat was ruthlessly carried out. Although there never were more than about a million Mongols, he established by these methods an empire that comprised the then known world from China to Central Europe.

The fourth type of mass extermination is a much more modern invention and its intent seems much more irrational; it is

meant to deal with a pseudo-conspiracy by a group defined by the perpetrator and arising out of a particular THEORY, BELIEF, OR IDEOLOGY. While its antecedents can already be seen in the witch-hunts of the Middle Ages, it saw its full development only in the twentieth century. We are all familiar with the horrors committed in Ottoman Turkey (Boyajian, 1972), Nazi Germany (Hilberg, 1961), and Stalin's Russia (Antonov-Ovseyenko, 1981). What is different about this fourth type of mass extermination is its result: for the first three types it can be argued that they produced tangible benefits for the perpetrators; for the fourth type it seems clear that it was carried out in spite of tremendous costs to the perpetrators -- costs that can be measured in economic, political, and developmental terms.

A CONCLUDING NOTE ON METHODS

The definition of concepts and the design of a typology are an essential part of any research enterprise. However, they are essential only in making sense of the data. In the study of genocide or mass extermination, the data present a set of particularly difficult problems. This is not the occasion for exploring these problems in detail. However, we propose to conclude this paper by at least mentioning the four kinds of problems that make such study particularly difficult:

- (1) The evidence is by its very nature difficult to obtain because throughout most of history relevant records either were not kept or did not survive;
- (2) Where records do exist, they either originate with the perpetrators or with the victims, but rarely do we find records from both;
- (3) When we do have records from the perpetrators and the victims,

they are often so divergent that it is difficult to decide what actually did occur, and the intentions of the perpetrator may be the most difficult evidence to discover; and

(4) The reliability of the records presents another problem, especially in the pre-modern period. Thus, we have evidence for genocides that occurred but were not reported; but we also have those that were reported, but never occurred.

CONCLUSION

We have tried to develop a conceptual and typological basis for scholarly research on 'genocide' from a historical and comparative perspective. The role of intent is central to our definition and our typology.

The first three categories in our typology are of primarily historical interest; modern states are generally too large to be liquidated by mass extermination. This is demonstrated by the man-made famine of the early nineteen thirties in the Ukraine.

Considering the inaccessibility of the archives of the USSR, it will probably remain impossible to document the intent of the perpetrator. But whatever the actual intent, it would have been impossible to implement the mass extermination of the entire Ukrainian population. In terms of our typology, we think that the case of the Ukrainian famine is a rather late occurrence of type 2, where the intent is to terrorize a people conquered by a colonizing power. It seems to have achieved this aim, albeit at enormous cost in human lives and suffering.

Instances of the first three types are now likely to occur only when involving quite small groups of people, such as the Amazonian Indians. Our fourth type is continuing to play a prominent part in our century, and it is likely to recur in the absence of meaningful means of prevention.

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